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THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEECH AT AN EARLY AGE

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- USSR -

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FOREWORD

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEECH AT AN EARLY AGE

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Following is the translation of an article by G. M. Lyamina, candidate, Ed.D., in Doshkol'noye Vospitaniye (Pre-School Training), No 9, September 1960, pp 59-65.

Speech is one of the most important aspects of neural-mental activity. In the course of a child's development, perception and memory improve under the influence of speech, and thought arises. By the second and third year the behavior of the child is regulated through the speech of the adult, and the whole process of education begins.

Insuring the normal development of children in the first three years of life is a serious task. Its resolution depends not only on the peculiarities of each age level, but also on the conditions in which the child lives and is brought up.

At home, on walks, on visits, etc. the child becomes familiar with various things and activities and receives many impressions and ideas on the basis of which his speech develops quickly. Frequently several adults in the child's family train him from the start; parents, grandfather, grandmother, neighbors around the apartment, and also older brothers and sisters. Notwithstanding that they do not always use correct and approved training methods, the child receives much that is useful from this instruction: surrounding objects are named for him, he is forced to do errands, the pronunciation of different kinds of words is done for him, and people look through books with him, teach him rhymes, and tell him stories.

These things occur even for children while still in nurseries. But here one adult supervises a group of 15-20 children, the setting is limited to children's furniture and toys, and the children are confined to a small area most of the time. Here there are no children who are considerably older in age. Children associate with others of the same age at an approximately equal level of development. The teacher in the nurseries, however, can achieve better results in a child's speech development than in the family if he knows the proper speed of this development and the factors which slow it down and speed it up.

By selecting special lessons, toys, and teaching aids, the instructor should broaden the ideas of the children and their orientation to their environment. He should be able to develop the child's understanding of the people around him and the child's speaking ability.

The first year of life is the preparatory stage for the development of speech. Vocal reactions appear in the first month: at first this is simply noise, that is pronunciation of sounds such as "gy, kkyh." This changes to a resonant sound, a prolonged pronunciation of the sound "a-a-a" with various intonations. At 5 or 6 months the child begins to babble, to pronounce whole syllables repeatedly (ba-ba-ba, ma-ma-ma, da-da-da). Besides babbling words, onomatopoeic words appear in the vocabulary of the child of 10-12 months (ks, av-av, bi-bi, and others). By 1 year the active vocabulary of the child is around 10-12 words.

Along with vocal reactions and the appearance of the first words, elements of comprehension of adult speech develop. Children know the names of several objects (clock, cup, doll, etc.) and the names of the surrounding adults and children and understand some actions and perform them at an adult's request: "give, take this, clap your hands".

Vocal reactions, much more valuable for the subsequent development of speech, arise when a child is happy, a state aroused by association with adults and the display of bright objects. To arouse happiness in a child, his sensory organs should be developed in the first months of life and he should learn to see and hear: he should watch moving objects, look for a long time at suspended toys, search out unseen sources of noise (for example, turn his head to the side from which an adult voice is heard). After 3 to 5 months the activity of the perceptory organs of the nervous system is considerably improved. The child recognizes the people close to him, distinguishes objects by their color and form, and delights at his mother's voice. In a child of 10 to 11 months one can already observe differentiated responses to different types of music. Children delight at hearing a dance tune and make animated movements and clap hands, but they listen attentively to quiet music. The ability to distinguish objects and sounds and a growing interest in the environment aids the development of speech and, most important, in understanding it.

Teaching the connection between the object and the word for it can be done only by observing definite conditions (the object must stand in the same place, people must always call the object by the same name). At the end of the first year the connections between the object and the word for it should gradually be broadened and the children should be trained to find objects in various settings (for example, a doll; to play with it and look for it not only in its customary place on the floor but among several other toys). Only then is the connection between the object and the word firm and will the ability for generalization develop further.

Conversation of the teacher and nannie with children individually and in a group at feeding and dressing time and especially at play time is widely practiced and is as important as other methods for provoking vocal reactions which arise when the child smiles and makes animated movements. For this reason development of vocal reactions in children in the first months does not lag behind as a rule. But, where the instruction is inadequate, the children fall behind in the development of speech in the second half-year. The cause is poorly developed

auditory concentration and untimely formation of imitation of adult speech.

It is necessary to induce the children to listen to the speech of adults and to imitate it. In nurseries basic attention is often devoted to visually oriented reactions ("show me where something is") and to the performance on command of actions and movements ("lie down," "sit down" "clap hands"). These do not teach the necessity of saying something, for example, the word "get" can mean whatever you want. Instructions in which the child must pronounce a word are underrated.

A group of children of 9 to 11 months is playing on the floor. Putting in motion a bright mechanical toy rooster, the instructor asks a child: "Vovochka, where is the cock-a-doodle-doo?" The younger children look in the direction of the toy, the older children point at it. Delighting at the sight of the bright object neither Vova nor the other children name it because the instructor forgot to ask them: "What is it?" and "How does a rooster cry out?"

Besides this, for the development of babbling, that is the repetition of one and the same syllable, a relatively quiet setting is needed so that the child can listen to the sounds pronounced by himself or the instructor and reproduce them. This condition is not always observed.

The second year of life is a period of intensive speech formation. Having acquainted himself with the objects which surround him and looked at pictures, the child masters the understanding of speech. The names of objects of furniture, china, clothing, and food and the names of children and adults surrounding him. He knows the names of the most common animals, birds, and plants and understands and performs instructions: "Cut me a flower," "Bring me a leaf," "Hide behind the bush." Gradually the child learns to pick out of the whole object the part indicated in the question of an adult, e.g. the paw, tail, eyes, and ears, of an animal and to show the location of his own hands, legs, and eyes and his buttons, bows, and pockets. The child learns the names of actions which he himself or an adult performs.

The attention of children should be turned, especially after 1½ years of age, to quality, state, and use of objects. For example: "See! Vova has a little ball and Lena has a large one." "Today it is cold and, therefore, we must wear overcoats." "Jelly is red and sweet." "These children are going on a holiday and they have pretty dresses and red bows" (said while looking at pictures).

The connections between actions and objects and the words which designate them become stronger. The children recognize the object in different and quite complicated settings and search out a requested plaything among many others. It is necessary to teach the child to understand that the actions which he performs with one toy can be carried out with others similar in character. For example, the request "take off" can refer to taking down a ring from a pyramid, a lid from a jar, the top block from a block pile. The ability to learn develops also; children recognize objects of a single name but different in color, size, and form, given to them as playthings or in pictures. Auditory

and visual differentiation develops. The child learns to distinguish objects with similar names and similar in appearance. Having looked over pictures with the instructor the children carry out instructions: "Show me where the ram is. Where is the drum?" "Bring the little mouse. Bring the basin." "Where is the rooster? And where is the cockerel? And where is the cock?" The instructor develops the comprehension of connections and relations between objects and the interrelations of objects and actions (for example: to put together a pyramid, rings and blocks are necessary; to open a lock, a key is necessary, to draw, a pencil is necessary.)

The teacher shows children older than 1 year 3 months some simple actions in a table or puppet theater (for example: washing dolls, feeding them) and after $1\frac{1}{2}$ years, gives pictures with a simple theme. After $1\frac{1}{2}$ years the children begin to understand the conversation of adults about events and things connected with the personal experience of the children -- such as that the weather is cold and coats and hats are necessary for a walk, about what is seen on a walk, the name of a dog that they often visit, what it eats, how it barks.

The children readily carry out the instructions of the adults: up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ years simple instructions consisting of one or two motions (for example: "Take the boots and give them to grandmother, Vale"). At $1\frac{1}{2}$ years to 1 year 8 months the children can carry out more complicated actions consisting of several components simply on the verbal suggestion of the adult and without demonstration (for example: "Go to the bedroom and get the shirt from the closet and bring it to me.")

The speech of the adult becomes the fundamental regulator of the child's conduct, prompting the beginning of action and determining its course. Thus, while able to look at something with interest, the child cannot pay attention to an occurrence or object until an adult says: "Look here is something." While knowing how to perform actions, the child cannot reproduce them until an adult says "Do something." Even though able to pronounce words, the child will play or look at pictures in silence until an adult asks: "What is this? Say something." To get the $1\frac{1}{2}$ -year old to perform an action, not only should the request be repeated ("show, say, do") but it should be accompanied by indirect prompting: "Look properly, do it again."

Great improvements take place in the development of active speech. The active vocabulary is enriched. Under $1\frac{1}{2}$ years the vocabulary consists of words composed of simple sounds (mama, give, dyadya, av-av, and others). The number of words pronounced is roughly 30. Thanks to the growing ability to repeat a number of words pronounced for him between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and 2 the vocabulary increases considerably (to 200-300 words). Many more words appear, words that designate not only objects and actions but also qualities that children can understand, i.e. adverbs, adjectives, etc. Simplified words (tu-tu, mu-mu) are exchanged for correct ones (machine, cow).

At first the child uses single words as requests. The cry "mama" in some cases means "give me an apple" and in others "I am afraid of the dog." But gradually, especially after $1\frac{1}{2}$ years, the children get

accustomed to making requests in two or three words and several grammatical changes appear in his speech. $1\frac{1}{2}$ -year olds often address an adult with babble and words pronounced emotionally with the corresponding intonation and mimicry. In the fourth half year speech becomes a means of intercourse with adults; one still could not speak of this as a means of communication of children with each other.

To achieve such rates of development the teacher has to remember that the child much more often responds with a pointing gesture than with a word, looking at the article presented by the adult who asks "show me, give me, do." Precisely such form of response is practiced in the nurseries and, as a result of constant practice, becomes so stereotyped that it can arrest later development of vocal responses. It is necessary, therefore, to teach children (especially up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ years) to respond with actions and movements to some questions and with words to others. It has been ascertained that methods which are meant only for the development of understanding (for example, "give me something," "show me where," "do something") do not guarantee the ability to speak. On the other hand if we train the child only in the pronunciation of words and do not pay attention to the complexity of understanding, then skill in conversation and the ability to orient himself to the setting and to understand things and relations in the nursery will not develop. Nor will the ability to carry out the requests of adults.

It is necessary to consider also the peculiarities of the growth rates of different aspects of speech. Before $1\frac{1}{2}$ years comprehension develops more quickly than speaking ability. In the period from 1 year to $1\frac{1}{2}$ years or 1 year and 8 months, therefore, things intended for the development of comprehension quickly become complicated. At first the child is occupied with an article, shown to him alone, and then he is placed among others and shown articles on a simple topic. Lessons intended for speech development are given in simple form, for example, in the form of pronunciation of separate words in response to the question: "Who lives in the house?" "How does the dog bark?" "Call the dog." After $1\frac{1}{2}$ years the lessons intended for the development of active speech become complicated and diversified as the active vocabulary grows considerably. The lessons are constructed so that the child is forced to talk in sentences.

Involved relationships for the child still have not been adequately constructed by analysts. For this reason conflicting responses are observed in different kinds of activity. Fewer speech reactions arise in walking than in sitting or standing, and they are expressed not in words but in emotional exclamations. When being shown a new article or a familiar article in an involved situation, a story for example, visual concentration often arises in which not only general movements are arrested but vocal reactions as well. The child looks at an article and is silent. If the article is taken away and the child is asked to repeat its name after it is said for him, a vocal reaction can be elicited. In actions with the articles, verbal reactions also frequently are arrested. These conflicting responses between vocal reactions and other kinds of activity gradually disappear by 1 year 8 months to 1 year 10

months. The children are accustomed to making combined reactions in which both the article and their verbal meaning enter.

How then should the child's speech be developed in this period when involved relationships have still not been constructed by the analysts.

Proper changes should be effected in the types of activity, in particular walking, climbing, and exercising for development of movements so that they are not wasted in silent lessons.

Lessons for the development of comprehension and pronunciation should be distinguished. After comprehension has developed, the instructor shows articles in different relationships or simple stories and accompanies the demonstration with explanations. Sometimes he switches the articles with pictures of them which is necessary for the development of generalization. Questions intended for a one-word answer ("Who is this?" "Tell me something") should not be put into the pictorial demonstration when the attention of the child is fully taken up with the workings of an article and the story of an adult. It is easier to get a verbal answer when toys and people are shown one at a time.

To create the favorable prerequisites for the development of active speech in the form of imitations, the teachers must make sure that children up to $1\frac{1}{2}$ years old imitate words. They must also insure that the pronunciation and their sound combinations is grasped by the children. The children should also experiment with pronunciation of new words by imitating adults.

The child, should be taught the ability to listen to the speech of the adult and to answer, not with movements or actions, but with speech. For example, if the adult after showing the child an article, asks "What is this?" the child should answer in a word, not by pointing. In conversation with children under $1\frac{1}{2}$ years it is possible, of course, to be satisfied with less perfect answers; for example with silent pronunciation or with pronunciation of words well known to the child instead of new ones.

To teach the children the necessity of speech, we should always create situations in which the child is forced to pronounce words: when it is necessary to request something of an adult, it should be done verbally.

In the third year the child's speech grows as intensively as at the preceding age level. Understanding the characteristics of articles and differences between them becomes clearer. Thus, earlier, the child called everything "flower" regardless of the kind of flower. In his third year he begins to distinguish and name several kinds of flowers, for example, camomiles and poppies. He distinguishes article of furniture, clothing and china more precisely (chairs and arm chairs, hand-bags and brief cases, caps and hats, etc.). His knowledge of animals deepens (their habits, food and habitats) as does his knowledge about birds and articles of clothing. The child acquires wider knowledge about the use of articles. At the end of the third year children begin to understand humor and jokes. And a joke for them is most often something that is out of the ordinary. For example children know very well that a dog barks and guards the house. But they laugh if it dances in front of them on its hind legs dressed in a little skirt.

Besides the ability to distinguish and analyze, the ability to generalize develops quickly in children. They understand, for example, that toys are toy horses, balls, dolls, and blocks; that china is cups, casseroles, and plates. But such a generalization of several articles is still difficult for the children and is observed infrequently. It is easier for them to generalize in answers to questions. "What are we eating?" "What do people wear when they go out for a walk?" "What flies?" "What grows in our garden?" 3-year olds already understand complicated questions "Where? whence? what kind?" and answer them. Thanks to the ability to generalize 2½-year olds can guess simple riddles of the kind: "Who gets up early, sings cock-a-doodle-doo and wakes up the children?" They are able to understand tales of events made familiar to them in earlier experience (without pointing out the article, toy, or picture). After 2½ they understand the meaning of the conversation of adults about events and occurrences not in their immediate experience. Thus, children know that it is cold in winter, that a rabbit eats carrots and cabbage. If these elements are connected and put into a new story, the child will understand it.

Active speech quickly develops and becomes more involved. The number of active words by the end of the third year is between 1,200 and 1,500, and all the parts of speech occur in the child's vocabulary (only participles and adverbial participles are rare). He himself names the color, size, and shape of an article in answering an adult's question and can explain the use and location of familiar articles. The grammatical construction of his speech becomes more involved. He makes use of all kinds of simple sentences, not only narrative, but exclamatory and interrogative and ask at the end of the second year: "What is this?" and in the third, "Where?" "Why?" "When?". They begin to unite two simple sentences into a compound sentence and sometimes at the end of the third year subordinate clauses appear.

The child memorizes and recalls short verses and songs; in answering the teacher's questions he can relate the contents of a familiar story or tale.

Thanks to a sufficiently large vocabulary and the knowledge of using it in different situations, there are more varied occasions for conversation with adults in which the child often takes the initiative. Conversation of children with each other starts up. This opens possibilities for many involved kinds of relationships, in particular for role playing.

Articulation becomes more perfect. Children can correctly reproduce all sounds in pronouncing a word except "r" and sibilants.

To what should the teacher devote special attention in the development of the speech of 3-year olds?

First of all the child should receive intelligible ideas about many things (animals, plants, natural phenomena), and not only about those things connected with the satisfaction of his food and sleep needs, and be able to reflect these things in his speech.

It is necessary to train the children to understand the cause and effect of an event (today it is raining; therefore we will not go for a

walk) and to explain the event and teach them to appraise it. Something out of the ordinary cannot always be correctly appraised by the child. Thus a kitten running around outside with a tin can tied to his tail provokes a child to laughter or fear instead of pity and sympathy if what he is seeing has not been correctly explained to him. In picture stories we should strive to have the child not only enumerate familiar objects but also try to recall the elements of the story. The child should be trained to listen to and understand stories of adults (about familiar things and events) without visual demonstration. We should try to have them address adults and each other more often and on varied occasions without being prompted. But we should not try to unite many children in play since they still cannot understand matters by themselves.

Compound sentences and isolated subordinate clauses in the speech of 3-year olds does not mean that they know how to construct involved sentences.

This often impedes children of pre-school age. But this fact should not encourage the instructors to use only simple sentences in conversation with children. The instructor's speech should contain samples of involved sentences. Then the children will have examples to imitate. For example, it is better to say: "We will sweat outside today because it is hot," or "Get up on the chair so that you can reach the pyramid," and not "Get up on the chair. Reach the pyramid."

It is necessary to have the children enunciate correctly, clearly, and expressively. We should remember that in the period when a child is beginning to speak in sentences and reproduce new words, pronunciation even of well learned sounds can get worse. So in the sentence: "say herring" the child reproduces the word correctly but in repeating it in a sentence it is pronounced with errors. ("The helling is on the prate.") For this reason in pronunciation of individual words and in simple exercises, it is necessary to have the correct pronunciation. This work should be conducted in kindergartens.

At an early age especially in the second or third year speech develops intensively. For this reason it is necessary to keep its development in mind in all the teaching work in the nurseries as well as in special speech instructions.